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## **Supervisor Ridley-Thomas Calls for Action on Blue Ribbon Commission Child Protection Plan**

Citing the dangers in response to the “state of emergency” declared by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection in its just-released report, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today called for the Board of Supervisors to support urgently needed measures to improve the county’s struggling child welfare system.

The release of the most comprehensive analysis of the county’s child welfare system and accompanying recommendation, have created a “breakthrough moment,” he said. “I think it’s time to act. The board has a responsibility to be deliberative with respect to analyzing and disposing of the recommendations, but we must not intentionally or unintentionally kick the can down the road.”

One key takeaway in the report is that the flaws in the system are structural: no one department is to blame.

In particular, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas noted that rather than single out the beleaguered Department of Children and Family Services for blame, the Blue Ribbon Commission emphasized that poor coordination between interlocking departments, agencies and systems contributed to the dysfunction as it pertains to maximizing child protection and safety.

Although the entire report requires thoughtful analysis of its recommendations, certain steps can and should be taken right away, the Supervisor said. In a read-in motion he outlined the following steps for the board to embrace:

A. Establish a multi-departmental team to analyze the feasibility of implementing the commission's recommendations.

B. Develop a pilot project in which public health nurses would accompany a social worker when investigating a child abuse and neglect referral for children under age one;

C. Develop a pilot project for children under age one who are temporarily detained to be evaluated at a medical hub.

He added that the work of the commission had been outstanding, noting the panel conducted 15 public hearings and heard from more than 300 people, including advocates, parents, former foster youth, social workers and medical professionals.

"The commission has given us a road to reform; the question remains whether we have the courage and commitment to travel down this new path," the Supervisor said.

Since the commission began its work last December, reviewing the flaws and structural fault lines that plague the county's child protection system, another 5,000 referrals of child abuse and neglect have been investigated.

"We see the result of stasis," he said. "Let's be clear: the status quo is not benign; we need to act and we need to act now."

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